



**PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN  
ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA MEDITERRANEE**

الجمعية البرلمانية للبحر الأبيض المتوسط

**2<sup>nd</sup> Standing Committee  
on Economic, Social and Environmental Cooperation**

Special Task Force on the Integrated Management of Resources (Water)

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*Report on the Integrated Management of Resources (Water) [adopted by  
consensus by the Assembly at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Plenary Session,  
14 November 2008, Monaco]*

Because they are located in the most populated arid region of the world, the countries of the Mediterranean basin encounter major challenges regarding the management of their natural resources. Water is, in particular, a crucial issue in this region marked, not only by the limited nature of this resource, but also by its very unequal distribution; indeed, North African States are only in possession of 13% of the total water resources available in the Mediterranean.

The exploitation index of renewable natural resources shows, in addition, the existence of an important pressure on water resources, especially in Egypt, Malta, Syria, Libya, and Israel. In these countries water consumption comes near, or even rises above, the limit level of renewable resources.

According to the information collected by the Blue Plan (see *infra*), the percentage of the Mediterranean population that has access to an improved water source has increased and reached, in 2004, more than 80% in the majority of countries (thus corresponding to a value nearing the French national average of 83%). The number of Mediterraneans lacking access to drinking water passed from 30 million in 2000 to 20 million in 2004. However, the situation continues to be less favourable in rural zones, especially those of Middle Eastern and North African countries, where the majority of the Mediterranean population lacking access to drinking water lives. Although the percentage of the population that has access to a decontamination system has increased, there are still about

47 million Mediterraneans that do not have access to suitable decontamination systems. Visible differences still exist between, European countries that border the Mediterranean Sea, and, countries located in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as between urban and rural areas.

Although the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea are far from suffering the drama lived in the Sahel countries, the increase of water demand is frightening as in most countries it is incompatible with the evolution of its availability. Although the demand already doubled in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, by 2025 it could still increase by 25% in the South and East of the Mediterranean. The contribution of irrigation to this increase is evident, as this activity represents 65% of the total water demand in the Mediterranean basin (48% in the Northern region and 82% in the Southern and Eastern regions). The pressure carried out is not only quantitative, but also qualitative, as, especially in the European countries, there exists an excessive concentration of either pesticides or nitrates in the water.

So as to ensure the efficient and sustainable management of water, it is necessary to ponder its different uses, such as irrigation, industrial usage, domestic usage, resource conservation and regeneration... An optimal management strategy is all the more urgent as the demand is called to increase due to demographic growth in the countries bordering the Mediterranean on the South and East, and also due to the development of tourism, industry and irrigated land, while at the same time the amount of natural resources will decrease in size or become more irregular, and thus more difficult to manage under the effects of climate change.

This concurrence of factors has serious consequences, including the modification of water regimes, the excessive lowering of the water table, the drying-up of natural springs, the recession of deltas, the deterioration of water distributed to the population, the growth of provision costs, the drainage of wetlands, among others. This situation will translate itself into important water shortages. Indeed, it is estimated that by 2025, 244 million people, or 44% of those living in the Mediterranean basin, will be "water impoverished". The constant decrease in water reserves will especially affect the States located in the Middle East and North Africa, as these regions are those most exposed to drought and water scarcity.

Confronted with these alarming perspectives, observations and forecasts both indicate that the increase of supply (which formed the basis for the traditional policy response to water problems in the Mediterranean, and included the accelerated construction of dams), is presently reaching its limits. Confronted with this situation, important progress can be made through water demand management. This idea consists of reducing water waste, improving and increasing the efficiency of its use (leaks, squandering).

In addition, introducing the principles and practices of Integrated water resources management (IWRM) in all the countries of the region as well as for the management of shared water resources, is of utmost importance for sustainable water management in the Mediterranean. IWRM promotes the coordinated development and management of water,

land, and related resources, in order to maximize the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems. In practice, this means giving water an appropriate place on the national agenda; creating greater "water awareness" among decision-makers responsible for economic policy and policy in water-related sectors; creating more effective channels for communication and shared decision-making between government agencies, organizations, interest groups and communities; and encouraging people to think "outside the box" of traditional sectoral definitions".

Indeed, out of the total water withdrawal, loss in terms of water irrigation was estimated to proceed 20% from transportation and 60% from the inefficiency of irrigation systems. In terms of drinking water, 20% of losses were related to transportation and 20% to leaks in the consumers' residences. In total, the amount of water withdrawn and wasted, or unused, is evaluated at 111 square kilometres, making up 38% of the annual water demand.

However, an alternate scenario that privileges water demand management would help to save nearly 54 square kilometres of water, or 24% of the estimated total demand in 2025. Water demand in the Mediterranean basin could, at very least, be stabilized at its 2000 level. In financial terms, savings are estimated at 17 billion euros per year.

Beyond these savings, these water demand management measures would allow a better social and economic evaluation of water withdrawal as well as the consideration of the water needs of different ecosystems. Keeping in mind the present importance of irrigation, projects supported by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean could prioritize on an integrated water management of agricultural policies. It is also essential that these projects contribute to a better access to drinking water –via investments in decontamination systems- as well as, simultaneously, to the awareness of a larger part of the population. This could be implemented through awareness campaigns and a modified ratemaking system, always keeping in mind the protection of the inhabitants most in need.

In spite of the fact that there is a real awareness of the problem and also that in spite of the real progress made, water management trends are not sustainable and water demand management has not yet enough imposed itself as a strategic priority. Other obstacles also arise against the concrete implementation of water demand management policies and strategies:

- institutional constraints (fragmentation of responsibilities and a lack of coordination between ministries that are in charge of water management)
- a lack of integration of the different policies (water policies and policies by different sectors)
- an inexistent legal framework and flexible controls
- an inadequate ratemaking
- a lack of the inhabitants' awareness of the necessity to conserve water, especially when it is inexpensive
- a lack of consumers' implication in the planning and management of water resources

- the existence of unqualified staff being in charge of water management
- the financial weakness of States, which thus holds back the implementation of national plans favouring the integrated management of water resources and water demand
- the lack of effective governance arrangements, effective and efficient national IWRM planning and lack of capacity building.

It thus befits to act at the same time upon all these levers so as to achieve a real increase in the awareness of all actors –national and local policy makers, heads of associations, corporations, and consumers- of the urgency of managing this resource in a more rational way, which is primordial for all inhabitants and economical activities, in particular farming.

## EXISTING INSTRUMENTS AND INITIATIVES

### THE MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN - BLUE PLAN

The theme of water, very important in the Mediterranean, is first of all addressed in a UN context by the 1976 Barcelona Convention for the Protection against Pollution in the Mediterranean Sea, and the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP), a UN organ under the power of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Although the initial focus of the MAP was on marine pollution control, it gradually shifted its focus so as to include coastal zone planning and management.

In replacement of the 1975 Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP), in 1995 the contracting parties adopted the Action Plan for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Sustainable Development of the Coastal Areas of the Mediterranean (MAP Phase II).

Today, 30 years later, the Barcelona Convention and the MAP are more active than ever before. MAP involves 22 contracting parties who are determined to meet the challenges of environmental degradation of the Mediterranean Sea and its coastlines, while at the same time encouraging regional and national plans that focus on sustainable development.

The Convention's main objectives are:

- to evaluate and bring about a reduction in pollution
- to assure the sustainable development of natural marine and coastal resources
- to integrate the environment into the economic and social development
- to protect marine and coastal habitats through actions seeking to prevent and bring about a reduction, and, if possible, an eradication of pollution, be it due to land-based or sea-based sources
- to protect the natural and cultural heritage
- to reinforce the solidarity between countries bordering the Mediterranean
- to contribute to the enhancement of the quality of life

In 1996, the Contracting parties of the Barcelona Convention decided to adopt the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD), and, in 2005, they adopted the Mediterranean Strategy on Sustainable Development (MSSD). MSSD's first, of seven, priorities of action, concerns the integrated management of water resources and water demand. This represents a new focus with respect to its original one, which was to concentrate on the Mediterranean Sea's decontamination.

Conceived as a framework strategy, the MSSD strives to inspire national strategies on sustainable development as well as strategies in different economical and political sectors. The mandate of the Plan Bleu, the centre for the regional activities of the MAP, is to follow up with this strategy by bringing together and diffusing a set of indexes, as well as by developing more in depth analysis and, with volunteer states, seeking good habits in term of water demand management.

Three workshops took place under the MCSD:

-the Frejus workshops (1997): "Water Demand Management"

-the Fuiggi workshops (2002): "Progress in Water Demand Management in the Mediterranean"

-the Saragossa workshops (2007): "Water Demand Management, progress and policy"

This workshop was jointly organized by the Plan Bleu, regional partners in the area of water (the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies, the Mediterranean Institute for Water, the Global Water Partnership in the Mediterranean (GWP-Med), the Mediterranean Initiative of the Ransar Convention on Wetlands (WetMed) and the Mediterranean Information Office for Environmental Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE)), the 2008 Expo Zaragoza and the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Zaragoza, under the protection of the MCSD. It benefited from the support of the French and Spanish Governments, the GWP-Med, the European Commission, and the Mediterranean Action Plan.

## THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERSHIP – EMWIS

The first conference between Ministers in charge of water management from countries in the Mediterranean basin, took place in May 1990 in Alger; at this point was adopted a common declaration. During the second Mediterranean Conference on Water, that took place in Rome in October 1992, the Mediterranean Water Charter was adopted. But the real turning point took place in November 1995 in Barcelona, with the Barcelona Declaration that started of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, of which water is the topic of one of its 13 chapters.

During the Inter-ministerial Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Water Management, that took place in Marseille in 1996, the creation of the Euro-Mediterranean Information on the know-how in the Area of Water, a strategic tool for the exchange of information and know-how on the area of water in and between countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, was established.

The next Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Water will take place in Ammam on

October 29, 2008.

The Marseilles Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Local Water Management (November 1996) led to a study in 1997 by a working group of ten countries, to clarify the procedures for the setting up of a system, which would make it possible to network existing sources of information on water in the 27 countries who signed the Barcelona agreement: EMWIS, i.e. the Euro-Mediterranean Information System on know-how in the Water Sector, a cooperation instrument that aims at facilitating access to available information on know-how in the water sector.

#### THE WORLD WATER COUNCIL

The World Water Council was established in Marseilles in 1996, in response to the global community's increasing concern about world water issues. Its mission is "to promote awareness, build political commitment and trigger action on critical water issues at all levels, including the highest decision-making level, to facilitate the efficient conservation, protection, development, planning, management and use of water in all its dimensions on an environmentally sustainable basis for the benefit of all life on earth".

The main objective of the World Water Council's project World Water Vision is to build a consensus among professionals and stakeholders to design management plans to avert, during the next 25 years, further regional and global water crises.

After Marrakech in 1997, The Hague in 2000, Kyoto in 2003 and Mexico in 2006, which attracted more than 20,000 visitors, the 5<sup>th</sup> Water Forum will take place in Istanbul in 2009.

#### THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is experiencing an important renewal due to the fact that industrial countries such as Australia and Spain have encountered accentuated desertification problems. The UNCCD addresses, on the side, water questions.

#### THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

We also need to stress the importance of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as an essential instrument to combat climate change and its negative effects.

#### UN MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The gap between rich and poor countries can be illustrated through their daily water consumption. The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF estimate that all human beings need, for drinking and bathing, at a very minimum "20 daily litres of water proceeding from a source located at 1km or less from the household".

The UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), developed in Johannesburg in the year 2000, seek, in terms of addressing water problems, to reduce, by 2015, by half the world population that does not have a sustained access to drinking water and basic water sanitation. Thus they imply providing, by 2015, drinking water to 300 million people and organizing water sanitation systems for 400 million people worldwide.

#### MEDITERRANEAN COMPONENT OF THE EU WATER INITIATIVE (MED EUWI)

The Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative (MED EUWI) constitutes an integral part and one of the geographic Components of the overall EUWI. It represents a strategic partnership among all related stakeholders (national, regional and international) in the Mediterranean region, aiming at contributing to the implementation of the water-related MDGs and WSSD targets. It, thus, seeks to make significant progress in poverty eradication and health, in the enhancement of livelihoods, and in sustainable economic development in the Mediterranean and Southeastern Europe, providing a catalyst for peace and security in the region which is a vulnerable and sensitive one from both an environmental and political view point.

MED EUWI is led by the government of Greece (Ministry for Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works and Ministry of Foreign Affairs). The MED EUWI Secretariat within the Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean Secretariat provides technical support and day-by-day running. The Euro-Mediterranean Water Directors Forum, serving as institutional support of the implementation of MED EUWI, provides advice and guidance on the MED EUWI further development and implementation.

MED EUWI develops its targeted regional and national activities through annual work programmes, supported and with the participation of a variety of institutions and stakeholders. More information can be obtained in [www.minenv.gr/medeuwi](http://www.minenv.gr/medeuwi) ".

#### HORIZON 2020 INITIATIVE

The Horizon 2020 Initiative corresponds to the more active Initiative of the EU Commission on environmental issues including water, in the Mediterranean, since 2005. The H2020 Initiative in particular covers a pillar on wastewater reduction that has direct linkages with the quality of the Mediterranean freshwater environment. Moreover, H2020 is the only environmentally oriented Initiative of the EU that has been included in the list of 6 themes of projects that have been adopted by the Paris Summit for the launching of the "Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean" (Paris, 13/07/2008).

At the present stage the initiatives have not given rise to multiple accomplishments. The historic European initiative on water management, the Euro-Mediterranean Regional Programme for Local Water Management, has financed only a couple of studies. The decontamination initiative of the Mediterranean by 2020, is, in comparison, much more advanced, as it disposes of a roadmap that has already been written out and is being discussed, and has started to undertake research. What more, what is lacking is a

permanent steering structure of these type of topics.